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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0301
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RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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STATE FOR WHA A/S TOM SHANNON

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SUBJECT: TFH01: AMBASSADOR'S JULY 30 CONVERSATION WITH
PRESIDENT ARIAS

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 663 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b & d)

¶1. (S) The Ambassador spoke with President Arias on the evening of July 30 to brief him on his meeting earlier in the day with President Manuel "Mel" Zelaya in Managua. The Ambassador noted that in the three-hour round of meetings he had urged Zelaya to "put on his presidential suit," take the diplomatic offensive, and work for a diplomatic solution on the basis of the Arias plan. He said he had told Zelaya that his activities on the Nicaraguan-Honduran border had earned him bad press coverage, and his opponents had labeled him a radical and reinforced the perception of his close ties to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. The Ambassador told Zelaya he would be welcomed in Washington and urged him to visit as soon as possible. The Ambassador informed Arias that Zelaya was interested in going to Washington (and had asked for a meeting with Secretary Clinton) and would probably visit Mexico and Brazil, as well. The Ambassador said that Zelaya was thankful for the U.S. support, including support for his family and the strong symbolic value of the visa sanctions, and stated his support for the Arias mediation. The Ambassador mentioned that Zelaya had warned that if a solution could not be found by the end of August, Zelaya would ask his supporters in Honduras to boycott the elections.

¶2. (S) Arias agreed that it was very important for the U.S. stay in close touch with Zelaya and to encourage him to stay away from the border and distance himself from Chavez and Ortega. Arias agreed that a visit to major capitals, including Washington, Mexico City and Brasilia, would be very positive. He said that during the Tuxtla Summit in Guanacaste he had spoken to President Calderon about inviting Zelaya to Mexico. Arias expressed concern that the Honduran Congress might not support his proposal for political amnesty. He requested that the U.S. exert more pressure on the Honduran Congress and again suggested the idea of a call from a senior U.S. Senator, such as Chris Dodd, to regime Congress President Saavedra. With regards to the Zelaya threat to boycott the elections, Arias said the Honduran Vice President had taken the same position during the Tuxtla Summit. He said the Central American leaders present (absent Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and President Zelaya) opposed the idea of boycotting the Honduran elections.

